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Cultural Responsivity What School Leaders Need to Know

*by Shana Ritter, Projects Coordinator at The Equity Project,
located at the Center for Evaluation and Education Policy at Indiana University*



WHAT DO WE MEAN BY CULTURAL RESPONSIVITY ANYWAY?

We view the world through the lens of culture; a system of beliefs, values, customs and behaviors that is filtered through our own individuality and experiences. Cultural responsivity is grounded in an awareness of cultural context and the strengths that students bring with them to school. Culturally responsive practice or pedagogy, which may also be referred to as cultural competence, means having the capacity to function effectively in cultural contexts which differ from your own.

Becoming culturally responsive is a developmental process which includes engaging in conversations about race and equity, reflecting on one's own culture and beliefs, and gaining awareness of other cultures. Cultural responsivity permeates every aspect of education: leadership philosophies, curriculum

(continued on page 7)

January 27-28, 2009



19th Annual
IPLA Winter
Conference

Don't Wait! Seats are Filling Quickly!

WINTER CONFERENCE

"RESULTS...POW!!"
**Rigor, Relevance
& Relationships**

Day 1

Tuesday, January 27, 2009

- Dr. Mike Schmoker, author of *Results Now: How We Can Achieve Unprecedented Improvements in Teaching and Learning*, will do a morning keynote presentation on the essential elements of school improvement.
- The afternoon will feature breakout sessions that focus on school improvement.

Day 2

Wednesday, January 28, 2009

- There will be an update on Indiana Educational Law focusing on Article 7, CORE 40 Assessment, and English Language Learners (ELL).
- Mr. Jim Warford, Executive Director of the Florida Association of School Administrators and from the International Center for Leadership in Education, will do a morning keynote presentation on the rigor and relevance framework.

Register online at
www.doe.in.gov/ipla and follow the
2009 Winter Conference link.



The Indiana Principal Leadership Academy Alumni Association is pleased to announce that the 19th IPLA Alumni Association Annual Winter Conference:

Results...POW!

Rigor, Relevance
Relationships,

The conference will focus on achieving school improvement results through rigor, relevance and relationships. Registration is now open to all Indiana educators. Conference information, including online registration and hotel reservations, can be found on the IPLA website at www.doe.in.gov/ipla.

19th Annual IPLA Alumni Association Winter Conference

Results...POW!!
**"Rigor, Relevance
& Relationships"**
January 27-28, 2009

Sheraton Indianapolis Hotel & Suites

***Achieving School Improvement Results through
Rigor, Relevance and Relationships***

Conference information, including online registration and hotel reservations, can be found on the IPLA website:

www.doe.in.gov/ipla

Online Registration

Registration is open to all Indiana educators.

To register, please go to the IPLA website:

www.doe.in.gov/ipla

Conference Fees

\$175.00 on or before January 1, 2009

\$225.00 after January 1, 2009

Winter Conference Breakout Session Proposals Wanted

The Winter Conference Planning Committee is seeking breakout session presentations that focus on school improvement results achieved through rigor, relevance and /or relationships. If you have a great breakout session idea, please go to www.doe.in.gov/ipla for more information and a proposal application. If selected to present at the conference, up to three presenters per accepted proposal will be provided free registration for the two-day event.

All proposals are due by October 3, 2008.



IPLA Profile

Ralph Shrader, Superintendent of the M.S.D. of Warren County



Ralph Shrader

In what school, corporation, or company do you work? I am superintendent of the M.S.D. of Warren County located approximately 40 minutes west of Lafayette.

What is your area of training? I have a Bachelor of Science in mathematics from Purdue University, a Master of Science in education, a K-12 license in administration from Indiana University, and an Education Specialist degree from Indiana State.

What was your IPLA experience like? Wonderful. I developed many friendships that will last a lifetime. The ability to network with the up and coming stars of education was a tremendous opportunity.

What is your connection to IPLA? Currently, I attend the winter conference, and I am going to be a facilitator for group 46 as a member of the Fredericks team!

How has IPLA benefited you and/or contributed to your professional life? I have so many more colleagues that I can call and ask for assistance. The professional development opportunities also helped give me a more well-rounded knowledge base to tackle the many issues we face as educators.

What is your philosophy of education or leadership? I believe that you need to surround yourself with good people and provide them with support and encouragement. I realize that I am just a small piece of the school corporation and that I need quality people to help share the load.

What have you been doing? Since Group 42 graduated, I have moved from building principal to assistant superintendent to superintendent. I have been working to make the transition as uneventful and painless as possible for the corporation.

What are you focusing on? Finances, finances, and more finances. I am working to build a healthy cash balance during the difficult financial times facing schools.

What is something that you have done recently? I have been balancing work, IPLA facilitator training, and time with my wife and young girls and enjoying every minute of it!

What is your favorite quote? "Discipline yourself and others won't need to." — John Wooden.

What are you reading at the moment? I love murder mystery novels. James Patterson, John Grisham and Harlan Coben are three of my favorite authors. "Woods" by Coben is the last book that I read.

BOOKS FOR LEADERS

Leadership Beyond Excuses: The Courage to Hold the Rope

by Dr. Eugene G. White, Superintendent of Indianapolis Public Schools



Book review by Janet Andriole, Teacher at Saint Louis de Montfort Catholic School in Fishers, Indiana, and member of Cohort Group 26 in Butler University's Experiential Program for Preparing School Principals (EPPSP)

Ropes, we are all familiar with ropes. We may have skipped them as children. We may have used them to move supplies or secure items on a flatbed truck. A rope has a million uses. The length, thickness, strength and age of a rope are relevant in deciding which type to use in different situations. A frayed rope used in a game of tug-of-war could be long and knotted, while the rope used by pioneers traveling west would need to be long and strong in order to pull wagons, schooners, and supplies. Dr. Eugene White uses the rope as a metaphor in his book, *Leadership Beyond Excuses*, as it is something that people can hold onto during times of change and adversity.



Janet Andriole

According to Dr. White, the strands of the leadership rope are comprised of a leader's beliefs, values, passions, purpose, courage and vision. Dr. White points out that a successful leader must have his stakeholders buy into the process of designing the rope, and they must feel an investment into its construction.

Although Dr. White's leadership philosophy is evident throughout the book, it is the eight excuses that he offers and the points about each that will benefit anyone currently in or aspiring to hold a leadership position. The excuses that negatively affect positive change are: people, vision (or lack thereof), politics, money, time, systems, competition and change. When these obstacles become reasons why schools cannot be successful, a leader either does not have a strong rope onto which he can hold, or he has not been able to motivate the stakeholders to share in construction. He compares these excuses to sandbags that are sometimes used to hold off the swollen waters of rivers and streams. Excuses may offer a temporary solution, but they will not be able to hold back the eventual floods of leadership failure.

Leadership Beyond Excuses is one that I can actually implement rather than one to which I can simply adapt. I have already subscribed to some of Dr. White's beliefs such as: "people by day, paper by night," "control money, don't let money control you," and "lead by action". Throughout the book, he brings his years of experience of working in education and incorporates his observations to not only suggest the excuses that often lead to failure but also to itemize pitfalls and offer positive preventative measures to keep potential struggles from occurring.

The countless examples of people in leadership positions and situations in which they needed strong leadership made reading this book not only valuable but also practical and authentic. I will refer to my notes often and keep the book nearby as I continue to develop my leadership rope.



> LEADERSHIP

The IPLA Way: IPLA's Hedgehog Concept

by Bill Gavaghan, IPLA Executive Director

In his book, *Good to Great: Why Some Companies Make the Leap and Others Don't*, Jim Collins coined the term Hedgehog Concept. Collins and his research team discovered one difference between those companies that make the leap between good to great and those that do not, the one difference being the Hedgehog Concept. According to Collins, good-to-great companies have a deep reflection and clear understanding of three questions, i.e., intersecting circles: 1) what you can be best in the world at, 2) what you can be deeply passionate about, and 3) what best drives your economic engine. Collins later modified the third question for the social sector to what drives your resource engine in his book, *Good to Great and the Social Sectors: A Monograph to Accompany Good to Great*.

The good-to-great companies, in answering the three questions, developed a simple, clear concept that guided all their work. Collins and his researchers labeled this the Hedgehog Concept. The Hedgehog Concept helps a company understand what they can be best in the world at, but just as important, what they can not be the best at. Collins points out that "doing what you are good at will only make you good; focusing solely on what you can potentially do better than any other organization is the only path to greatness" (Collins, 2001, page 100).

The Hedgehog Concept is not a goal to be the best or a strategy to be the best, rather it is an understanding of what you can be the best at. Great companies determine their strategic plan on that understanding. When IPLA kicked-off its strategic planning process in 2006, consultant Steve Barone of Transformation Systems, Ltd. challenged IPLA with the following question: What is IPLA's brand? It is important to realize that the phrase Hedgehog Concept could have easily stood in for the word brand. In the 22 years IPLA has been in existence, what has helped superintendents and principals to

believe in the Academy's mission and its capacity to deliver on that mission is IPLA's brand or Hedgehog Concept. Such is the driving force behind IPLA modifying its vision and mission statement, creating core values and a strategic objective, moving from 21 standards to 13 curriculum standards and writing rubrics for each of the 13 standards.

In June 2008, the IPLA Action Planning Team, a group comprised of superintendents, principals, teachers and representatives of the business community charged with the implementation of IPLA's strategic plan, reflected upon and finalized The IPLA Way, IPLA's Hedgehog Concept.



Bill Gavaghan

THE IPLA WAY

IPLA is deeply passionate about and committed to strengthening the leadership skills of Indiana principals to improve student learning.

IPLA is the best at creating a life-long collaborative community of learners by providing exceptional professional development. The Academy is exclusively and consistently devoted to expanding the leadership capacity of principals to model, expect, and achieve excellence as measured by world-class student learning.

IPLA is driven by a collegial community motivated to serve others. Individuals' gifts are shared and received in a culture that honors, supports, informs, inspires, and empowers personal and professional transformation.

Collins, J. (2001). *Good to great: Why some companies make the leap...and others don't*. New York, NY: Harper Collins Publishers, Inc.

The IPLA Way: The Academy Helps Central Indiana Flood Victim

The severe flooding that swept across central and southern Indiana in June caused widespread destruction that wreaked havoc in the lives of local residents. Among those affected by the flood was Trevlac, Indiana resident Carolyn Green, an employee of The Seasons Hotel in Nashville, Indiana. Carolyn, a grandmother raising five grandchildren, lost her home to the flood. At the recent IPLA Session held at the Seasons Hotel on June 9-11, 2008, the IPLA family gave its support to Carolyn and her family by donating \$940.00 in order to help them meet their immediate needs and to begin the process of finding a new home.

Unfortunately, Carolyn and her family were unable to rebuild their house destroyed in the flood. However, they were able to find a home that was close to their original one. They presently are working on the new home and should move in shortly. They also have a buyer for their land on the flooded property.



Family and Community Involvement

What School Leaders Need to Know

Julie Havill-Weems, Indiana State Improvement Grant, Family Coordinator and Implementation Coach

School leaders have the opportunity to guide the development of effective family and community involvement in the educational process. To make the most of this opportunity, here are a few things schools leaders need to know:

Family, school, and community partnerships have benefits for students, families, schools, and communities. Parent involvement has been linked to improvement in student grades, attendance rates, graduation rates, and behavior. Family and community connections with schools have been demonstrated to positively impact school reform efforts, improve school climate, and increase school access to human, financial, and material resources. Family and community involvement with schools has been demonstrated to benefit families by improving attitudes toward education and increase their understanding of schools. Moreover, such cooperation has been shown to increase community resources, resulting in greater support and service to families as well as an increase in the skills of family and community members for addressing broader community needs. A New Wave of Evidence: The Impact of Family, School, and Community Partnerships on Student Achievement (<http://www.sedl.org/connections/resources/evidence.pdf>) is a useful resource for research on the benefits of family and community involvement with schools.

Negative assumptions and misconceptions are barriers to involvement. Often assumptions are made about familial ability or interest in supporting education. If a student's family does not attend an open house or a parent-teacher conference, it might be assumed that the student's family does not value education. This assumption can negatively impact future interactions with the student and family. To develop strong family and community collaboration, it is important to explore the assumptions of school personnel and the potential impact these assumptions have on family and community involvement. Culturally Responsive Parental Involvement: Concrete Understandings and Basic Strategies by King and Goodwin (<http://www.aacte.org/Publications/kinggoodwin.pdf>) is a booklet that can help begin the conversation about negative assumptions and misconceptions.

Family and community involvement in education is not a substantial part of teacher and administrator preparation programs. Multiple surveys of teacher and administrator preparation programs have revealed that teachers and administrators may not receive the pre-service training



Julie Havill-Weems

necessary to be prepared to collaborate with families and communities. Professional development for teachers and administrators is necessary to build their capacity for partnering with families and the community. Just a few of the resources for professional development in this area include the Indiana Partnerships Center (www.fscp.org), the Family and School Partnerships Module from IDEAL Indiana (<http://www.idealindiana.com/ideal/modules/51/>), and the National Network of Partnership Schools (www.partnershipschools.com).

Family and community involvement can grow and thrive with a strategic, comprehensive approach. A strategic and comprehensive approach includes:

- A team with participation from all stakeholder groups
- A plan that results from an assessment of the status of partnerships and the strengths and needs of students, the school, families, and the community
- Integration of partnership activities with other school improvement work
- Evaluation of the impact of partnership efforts to inform future planning.

Beyond the Bake Sale: The Essential Guide to Family-School Partnerships by Henderson et al, *Engaging All Families: Creating a Positive School Culture by Putting Research Into Practice* by Steven M. Constantino, *Partnerships By Design: Cultivating Effective and Meaningful School-Family-Community Partnerships* (<http://www.nwrel.org/partnerships/cloak/booklet-one.pdf>), and the National Network of Partnership Schools (www.partnershipschools.com) are four resources for developing a strategic, comprehensive partnership approach.

Family and community involvement in education will look different from family to family, school to school, community to community. How families, communities, and schools interact to support students is reflective of the cultures, experiences, strengths, and needs of all partners. Successful family and community involvement efforts result from a variety of opportunities for connection and the avoidance of any single approach. Examples of successful approaches can be found in *Family Involvement in Children's Education: An Idea Book* (<http://www.ed.gov/pubs/FamInvolve/execsumm.html>).

For more information about developing strong family, school, and community partnerships, please contact Julie Havill-Weems at jhavill@indiana.edu.



(RESPONSIVITY continued from page 1)

and instruction, data-based decision making, assessment, family and community engagement and policy decisions. Cultural responsiveness necessitates developing the skills, tools, and knowledge, along with the experience to apply them, in cross-cultural settings.

CHARACTERISTICS OF CULTURAL RESPONSIVITY INCLUDE:

- Validating students' cultural identity in classroom practices and instructional materials
- Acknowledging students' differences as well as their commonalities
- Being aware of how one's own cultural views and values influences practice
- Assessing student's ability and achievement validity
- Including multiple perspectives in decision making
- Engaging with families in ways which are culturally meaningful

SOME QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER WHEN ASSESSING CULTURAL RESPONSIVITY:

- Do our methods of instruction and the content of our curriculum draw from the experience of our students and the communities they come from?
- Do our teaching styles relate to the multiplicity of ways in which our students learn?
- Are we using data in the most effective ways possible to understand our students, our school, our challenges, and our successes?
- Are we promoting a just and equitable system which consistently increases the access to opportunities for all our students?
- Are we engaged in professional development that is ongoing and connected to practice?

HOW DOES THIS CONNECT TO POLICY AND PRACTICE?

The relevancy of cultural responsiveness has become central as we grapple with how to create opportunities that provide access to success for all our students. The continuing conversation on the achievement gap has helped to focus attention to issues of educational equity at the local, state, and national levels. Federal legislation mandates schools to address the ongoing issues of achievement, discrepancies in discipline, and graduation rates, as well as disproportionality in special education. Indiana's school improvement plan, PL221, includes a mandate for schools to incorporate cultural responsiveness through culturally appropriate strategies, disaggregated data analysis, and professional development necessary to improve cultural competence. IPLA has also developed curriculum standard rubrics which address culture.

WHAT ARE SOME STEPS I CAN TAKE?

The literature on cultural responsiveness and the IPLA standards on culture offer concrete examples of developing culturally responsive practice including:

- Build a culture of inquiry, reflection and action research which could take the form of teacher teams, study groups or professional learning communities exploring research-based strategies.
 - Know the community and families in order to best utilize resources and respond to needs.
 - Encourage cultural self-awareness; what values and expectations do we have? In what ways are they similar or different from our students?
 - Use text based discussions to move the conversation forward.
- Choose a book or an article and dedicate part of each staff, grade level or team meeting to responding to critical questions.

WHAT ARE SOME RESOURCES FOR CULTURAL RESPONSIVITY?

- The Equity Project (<http://www.ceep.indiana.edu/equity/>)
- The National Center for Culturally Responsive Educational Systems (NCCREST) (<http://www.nccrest.org/>)
- Some books:
 - *The Dreamkeepers* by Gloria Ladson-Billings (Jossey Bass, 1994)
 - *Why are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria?* by Beverly Tatum (Basic Books, 1997)
 - *Using Data to Close the Achievement Gap* by Ruth S. Johnson (Corwin Press, 2002)
 - *Beyond Heroes and Holidays* by Enid Lee (editor) (Teaching for Change, 2002)
 - *Courageous Conversations* by Glenn Singleton and Curtis Linton (Corwin Press, 2005)

QUOTE CORNER

"No matter what accomplishments you make, somebody helps you."

Wilma Rudolph



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C A L E N D A R

2008

October 6-7 Group 44 & 45 Academy Session
at the Sheraton Indianapolis Hotel and Suites

2009

January 27-28 19th Annual IPLA Alumni Winter Conference
at the Sheraton Indianapolis Hotel and Suites

February 9-10 Group 44 & 45 Academy Session
at the Sheraton Indianapolis Hotel and Suites

April 14-15 Group 44 & 45 Academy Session
at the Sheraton Indianapolis Hotel and Suites

April 16 Group 44 Graduation

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